



STATE HEALTH POLICY OPTIONS

WORKFORCE

Governors have significant influence over the health workforce in their states. The combination of an aging population, expanding use of technology, access constraints in rural and underserved areas, and the passage of the Affordable Care Act has created greater urgency around health workforce planning. Many important elements of workforce capacity and supply fall under states' purview, including the types and diversification of professions, numbers and demographics of individuals working or in the education pipeline, residency slots, geographic distribution of the workforce, recruitment and retention, and licensure and regulation. This section focuses on how states can develop effective workforce planning and development strategies to respond to the growing demand on health care.

Workforce Planning and Analysis

Systematic workforce planning and analysis enables states to measure, track, and analyze the flow of health professionals across geographic regions and specialties. By adopting a workforce planning program, states may be better able to identify current and potential workforce shortages and consistently project the supply and demand of health services and professionals. The goal for states is to ensure that there is some level of alignment between workforce capacity and projected demand on health care.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention focuses on developing and improving in-state educational opportunities available to health care providers to support higher workforce retention, especially in rural and underserved areas. States are interested in recruitment and retention because 1) they have authority to oversee the accreditation of educational and training programs, 2) Medicaid provides financial support for graduate medical education (GME) in hospital residency programs, and 3) state level initiatives support an array of education programs for allied health professionals.

Licensure and Regulation of Practitioners (Scope of Practice)

Each state regulates and governs the licensing requirements for health care professionals. States have enacted laws to establish licensing or regulatory bodies charged with developing standardized rules to regulate how health professionals practice. Those rules define the

minimum level of education and experience required to practice and the scope of practice - procedures, actions, and process - that can be undertaken by a licensed professional. Analysts and experts believe states have an opportunity to improve access to health services and reduce costs by exploring to what degree their licensing and scope of practice rules allow professionals to practice at the top of their training.

Work Redesign

One area where states may have great latitude to enforce change is workforce redesign, which entails leveraging existing roles to create new ancillary and supporting roles (e.g., nurse navigators, community health teams). Redesigning the workforce also requires a shift in how medical and allied health professionals interact, moving from disjointed patient hand-offs to a more team based, collaborative, and coordinated approach.